

DCBS Family Satisfaction Survey

January 4, 2011 to December 6, 2011

As part of PIP development, the state created action step 1A.5, the implementation of customer satisfaction surveys. Information collected from the survey was designed to inform the state agency about the quality of worker/client interactions. The survey was introduced to DCBS staff through multiple mediums. It was sent out to staff as formal memorandum transmitted by email. It was also distributed through an informal email reminder, and the University Training Consortium developed posters that were distributed to every local office. A link to the survey was also placed on the "DPP-154 Service Appeal form." Customers receive these forms at any interaction with the agency when the agency is developing, modifying, denying, reducing, suspending or terminating services. Thus the potential survey pool included all clients who were subject to an investigation, all clients subject to a case open for ongoing service, and any client of ongoing services at case closure.

This report is laid out three sections:

- I. Response rate and demographics
- II. Client Responses to Key Survey Statements and Questions
- III. Discussion and Next Steps

Section I. Response Rate and Demographics

Overall, an analysis of the response rate and demographics of respondents have both positive and negative implications for the validity of survey outcomes. First, the response rate of client surveys is extremely small compared to the population notified of their opportunity to participate. A rough estimate of eligible cases, based on state fiscal 2010 figures for ongoing cases, investigations, and assessments, may be approximately 50,000 (cases). For the period of January 2011 through the end of November 2011, only 36 surveys were returned. The low number of surveys completed compared to the potential surveys that could have been completed increases the risk that responses are not a reliable picture of worker/client interaction.

Unfortunately, the number of surveys returned actually represents and increase in response rate following concentrated department efforts to encourage more participation. However, of the survey responses received, the majority of respondents were not long term clients, nor had they experienced an out of home episode during the life of the case. Anecdotally, the most extreme negative client reactions seem timed to critical junctures associated with placement of a child in foster care.

Figure 1: Sixty three percent of respondents (63%) indicated that they have been working with DCBS for less than a year.

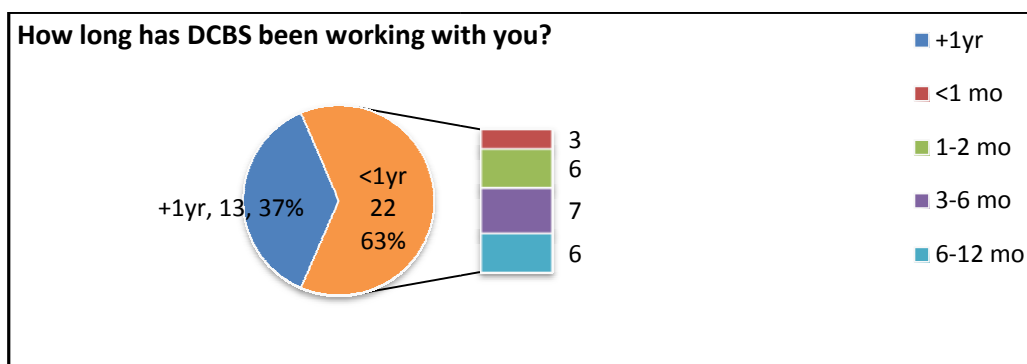


Figure 2: The majority of respondents (74%) indicated that their child(ren) have never been removed and placed in state custody.

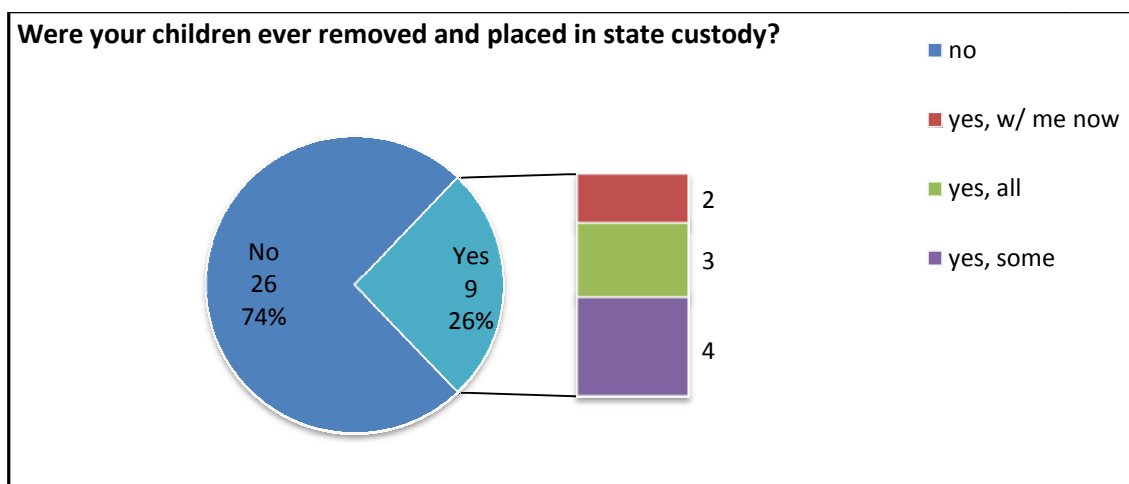
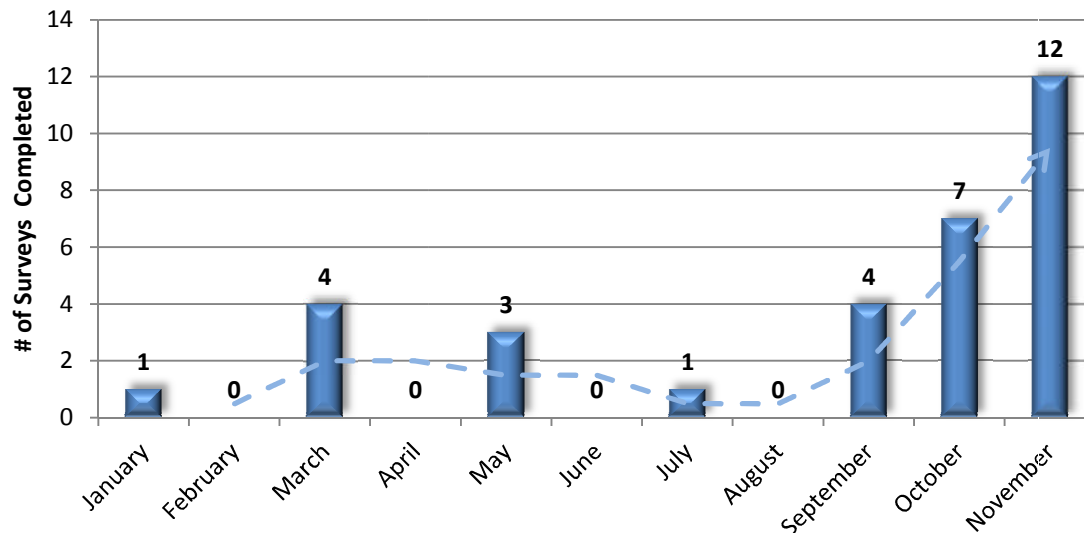


Figure 3: Surveys completed during the time period indicate, though the rate increased over time, the overall rate was extremely low compared to the number of potential surveys.



A very low response rate is more susceptible to self-report bias where only those with the most extreme opinions are participating, however, participating clients were those expected to have more moderate opinions given they had never experienced the removal of their child. Ultimately, client perceptions were not clearly favorable or unfavorable of worker interaction. One possible interpretation is that the low number of responses simply does not provide enough information to assess survey responses adequately.

Section II. Client Perceptions

As part of the survey, respondents completed a Likert scale on a variety of questions about their perception of their worker. Survey responses were coded numerically on a Likert scale from 1 to 4 with neutral responses coded as missing in order to provide a measure of respondents' level of agreement with the questions. In general, respondents showed the strongest level of agreement with the following statements:

- I know what my worker expects me to do.
- My worker is professional and polite.
- My worker treated me with respect.

Figure 4: Respondents level of agreement with survey statements.

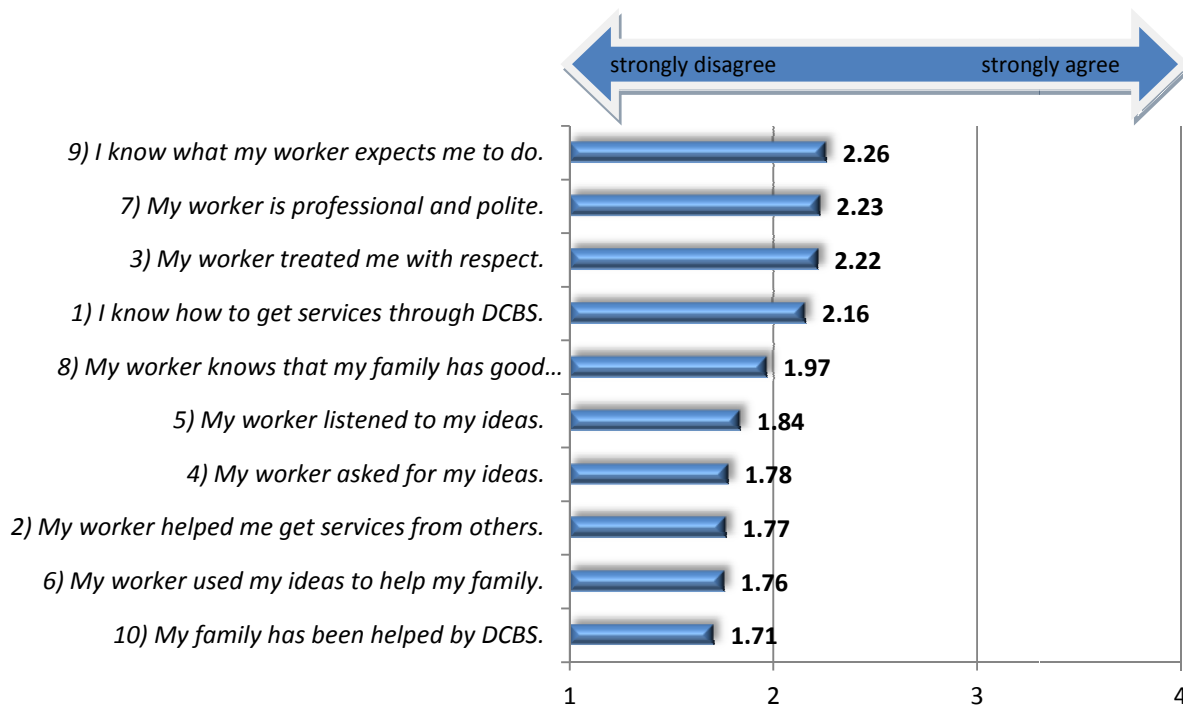
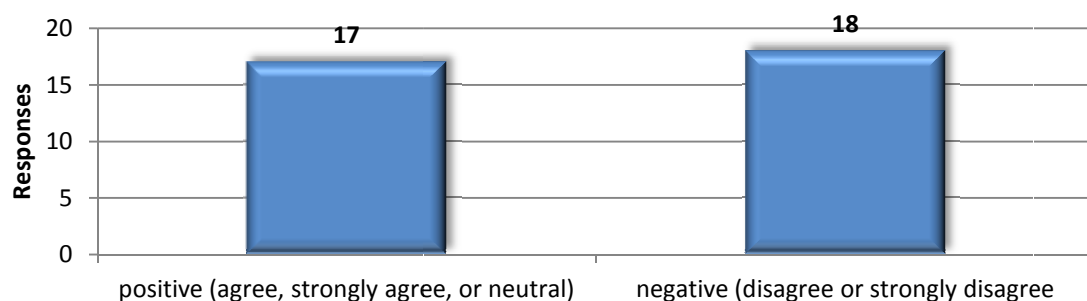
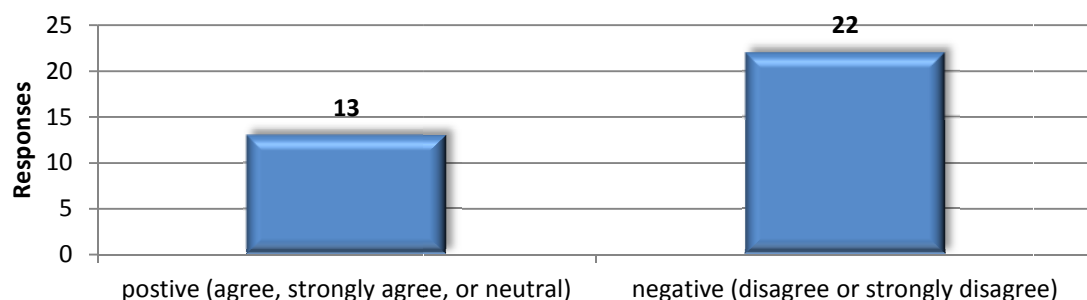
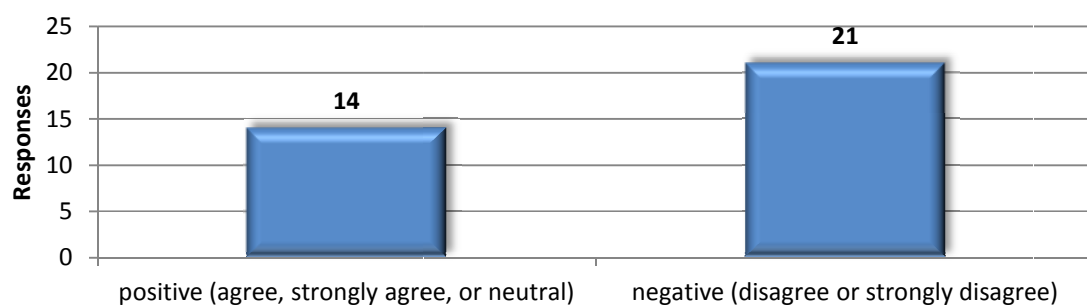


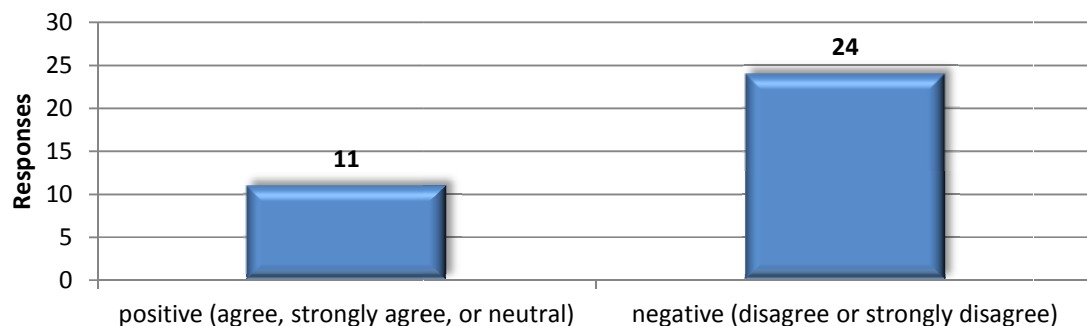
Figure 5: Due to small numbers, the standard deviation (the potential variation in the mean) is so great that the mean can't clearly be identified as a positive or negative response.

Question	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1) I know how to get services through DCBS.	31	2.16	1.036
2) My worker helped me get services from others.	31	1.77	1.087
3) My worker treated me with respect.	32	2.22	1.211
4) My worker asked for my ideas.	32	1.78	1.099
5) My worker listened to my ideas.	32	1.84	1.194
6) My worker used my ideas to help my family.	33	1.76	1.173
7) My worker is professional and polite.	30	2.23	1.223
8) My worker knows that my family has good qualities.	30	1.97	1.098
9) I know what my worker expects me to do.	31	2.26	1.210
10) My family has been helped by DCBS.	31	1.71	1.071

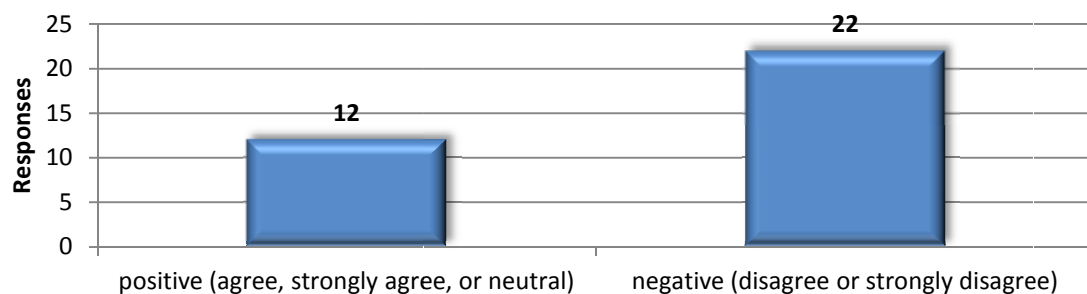
Figures 6 through 15: Positive and Negative Responses By Question

1) I know how to get services through DCBS.**2) My worker helped me get services from others.****3) My worker treated me with respect.**

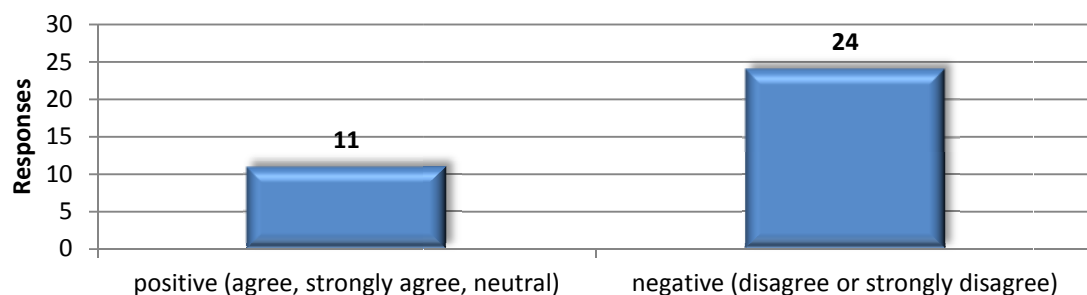
4) My worker asked for my ideas.

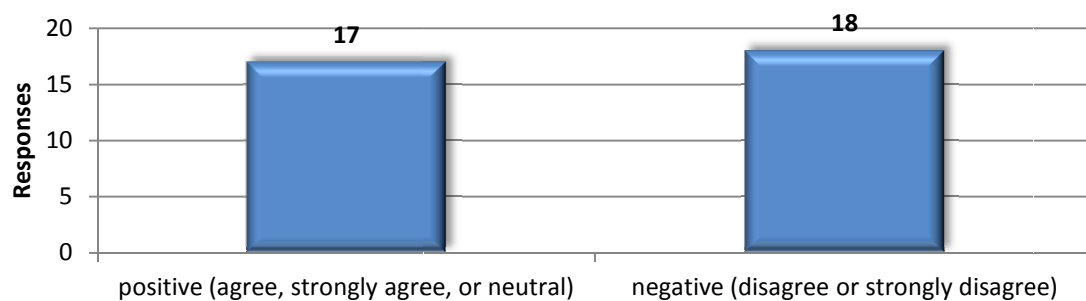
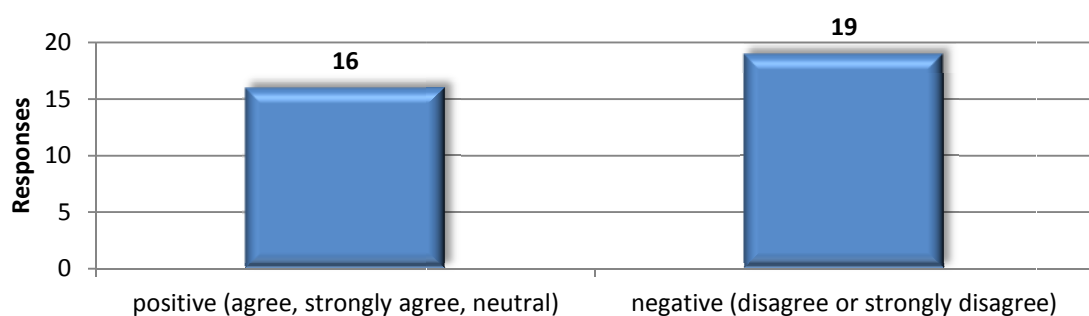
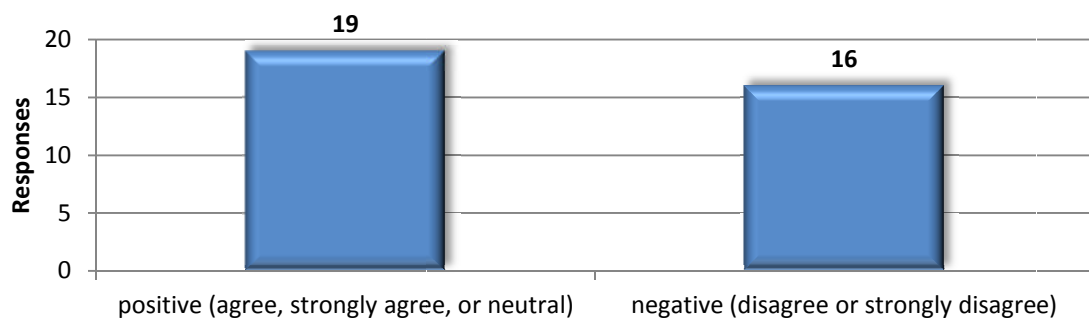


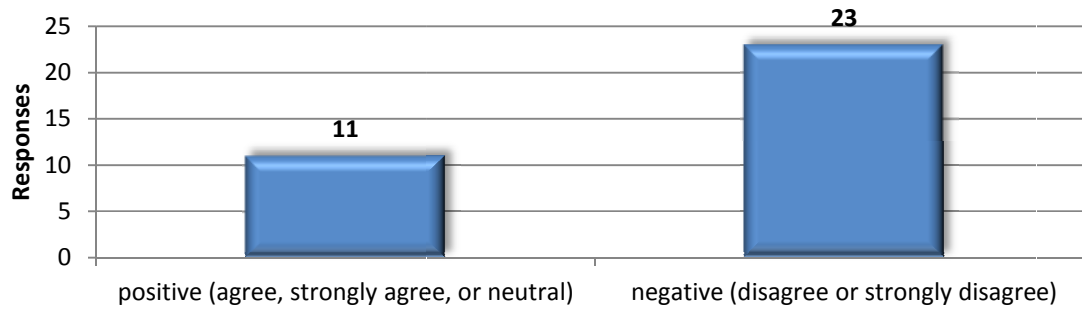
5) My worker listened to my ideas.



6) My worker used my ideas to help my family.



7) My worker is professional and polite.**8) My worker knows that my family has good qualities.****9) I know what my worker expects me to do**

10) My family has been helped by DCBS.**Section III. Discussion and Next Steps**

In conclusion, survey responses are not yet a good source of information about worker and client interactions. The small numbers make true analysis impossible since the perceptions of the respondent can't reliably be attributed as positive or negative (reference Figure 5). However, there are potential areas of consideration as the survey process continues.

Future survey questions might better consider the role of the survey respondent in the case. Most respondents indicated their child had never been placed in state custody, but that does not identify whether or not the respondent's child had been voluntarily and temporarily permitted to stay with a relative during an investigation at the agency's request. It does not identify whether or not the respondent's child was placed involuntarily by court action in the home of a relative. It also doesn't identify whether or not the respondent was someone other than the parent who may have had a grievance unrelated to foster placement, i.e. a substantiated perpetrator, a relative placement, a relative not selected to serve as a placement, or a foster parent experiencing a change in service. However, additional survey questions tend to lower the response rate, and may be problematic.

In viewing individual questions, tentative evaluation of responses indicate the lowest scores are around the use of family member input. However, department interventions are often mandated and generally created around safety issues. While there is a tendency to define engagement as the incorporation of family input, in reality, that may not be an appropriate philosophical orientation. Engagement may be better described, and survey questions may better inquire, whether or not family members were kept informed, whether or not they were allowed to participate—and less emphasis placed on the actual use of their ideas.

On a positive note, survey questions did note that family's seemed to have an understanding of the expectations associated with their case, and workers were described as professional. However, family's did not overwhelmingly feel respected, and those responses seem to conflict with the depiction of workers as polite and professional. Over time, more survey responses may clarify respondent perceptions. Additionally, the questions may be reordered so that the questions related to professionalism and respect fall in sequence near the beginning of the survey. By inserting a question about respect in between questions about the use of the family's ideas, the survey may be inviting a self-reporting error. Self-report studies are inherently biased by the person's feelings at the time they filled out the questionnaire, and a negative response on a prior question may influence the likelihood that the respondent will answer a following question negatively as well.

As part of the agency's efforts to improve the survey's reliability, the agency undertook several efforts to improve client participation and increase the response rate included:

- Placing posters in local offices with a link to the survey site;
- Sending out tip-sheets regionally reminding staff to encourage clients to participate in the survey; and,
- Posting a link to the survey on the DCBS main page

However, the survey process may be of limited benefit versus the effort of implementation for a child welfare agency. The low numbers don't offer a reliable measure of worker/client interaction at this time. In a year's time, with thousands of possible respondents, only 36 were compelled to complete the very brief survey. It may not be possible to increase the participation rate, and if not, it won't be possible to evaluate the responses in a meaningful way. Department leadership may continue to collect surveys, but may also consider other routes for evaluating the quality of worker/client interactions.